

Mr. Bowser and His Night Trip

Attempts to Get Closer to Nature on a Hot Evening and Leaves Home.

RIDES INTO COUNTRY

Camps Under a Tree Only to Be Disturbed by Tramps and Routed Out by Constable.

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THE day had been hot, and Mr. Bowser had wilted his collar and grown irritable as he moped at the perspiration. He came home dragging his feet and ready for a row, but Mrs. Bowser was so tactful that he could get no opening. When dinner had been concluded his irritation had somewhat passed away, but presently he said:

"Hang this kind of weather, anyhow! If it hadn't been for your objections we should have been among the mountains or down at the seashore now."

"You forget, my dear," replied Mrs. Bowser. "You decided early in June that you could not leave your business this year."

"But we might have run out to some farmhouse for a week."

"Yes, but you showed me figures to prove that it was just as hot out in the country on a hot day as it was in the city."

"The same old brick and mortar," he said as he looked up and down the



"THIS IS SOMETHING LIKE IT."

street from the front steps. "The same hot streets by day—the same noises at night. There is no nature in a city. Everything is artificial, even to the trees and grass. If I could get out somewhere and commune with Nature for three or four hours it would seem more like living."

"But you can surely take a day off."

Mr. Bowser reflected for awhile and then suddenly exclaimed:

"By the horn spoon, but why haven't I thought of it before?"

"Taking a day off?"

"No; taking a night off. During the day one is full of business and doesn't notice it so much, but when night comes one longs for the peace and quietness of the country. I have seen nights in summer when I'd have given \$5 to hear the voice of a tree toad."

"Do you mean that you'd like to go out and stay at some farmhouse over-night?" asked Mrs. Bowser.

"Farmhouse be hanged! I mean that I'd like to get beyond the sight and sounds of the city and pass the night under a tree. That would be getting close to nature. One could think and ponder and reflect. The soft rustle of the leaves, the chirping of the crickets, the low call of the night birds—all these things would touch a responsive chord in a man's soul. Say, I'm going to try it on this very night."

"You are so easy to take cold in your head, you know."

"Never had a cold in my head in my life, and you know it. It will be useless for you to raise any objections."

"I don't want to. If you want to go out and commune with Nature I don't see why you shouldn't. What time will you return?"

"Not till sunrise, anyhow. Think you'll be afraid to stay alone?"

"Not at all. You had better take your revolver along. All is peace and love out in the country, but a pistol is a good thing sometimes."

"I want no weapons. Nature had nothing to do with the making of deadly weapons. I'll take along half a dozen cigars, and while you are sweltering here and being kept awake by whoops, screams and yells I'll be whispering with nature under the stars."

An hour later Mr. Bowser started. He took a suburban street car and rode four miles beyond the brick and mortar, and after walking along a country highway for forty rods he found a tree and sat down to begin the business of communing. It was a moonlight night, and the feeling was one of peace on earth and good will to men. He had brought along pencil and paper, and as he sat with his back to a tree he wrote:

"This is something like it. I am beyond the rush and roar and wickedness of the city, and the change is wonderful. Just now I wouldn't strike a man if he called me a liar."

"The crickets are singing their cheery

songs. They seem to realize what I am out here for, and they welcome me. I don't know whether a cricket has a soul or not, but I feel in consonance with them."

"Have just heard a tree toad. First I've heard in twenty years, and the sounds carry me back to other days. The song of the tree toad is an innocent one. I believe it would melt the heart of a convict and make a better man of him. I will write a letter to the governor tomorrow and suggest that tree toads be introduced into state prisons."

"....."

The above line represents a break in Mr. Bowser's notes, caused by two farmers who came along in a wagon. When they saw him sitting under a tree with his hat off and a cigar in his mouth the team was stopped and one of them called out:

"You feller there, but what are you doing?"

"What is that to you?" demanded Mr. Bowser as the song of the tree toad was forgotten in an instant.

"I'll show you what it is to me! I'm a constable, and it's my business to keep an eye out for such fellers as you. Looking for a chance to rob some hen-roost, is 'pose?"

"You can s'pose any blamed thing you want to!"

"Mighty sassy, ain't you? Waal, I'll be back in about an hour, and if you are here then I'll make it hot for you."

For the next fifteen minutes Mr. Bowser was so mad that he paid no attention to tree toads, crickets or rustling leaves, but he finally began to cool off and wrote:

"I have just heard the song of a whippoorwill, and it was not mixed up with the notes of a hand organ or the yells of a street peddler. Mrs. Bowser will be sorry she didn't come."

"The howling of the kine reaches my ear. I don't know what they want to low at night for, but the sounds are those of pastoral peace. I am an ass that I haven't spent every night this summer out here."

"In the bushes not far away a nightingale has just broken into song. While his notes are beautiful, they are also sad. There is somehow a dreamy sadness about them that touches the heart and reminds one of—"

"!!!!—????—!!!!—????—!"

This break in Mr. Bowser's notes was occasioned by two tramps who were "hoofing" it into town, but stopped when they saw him under his tree.

"Hello, cully! What's doin'?" asked one.

"You go on!" shouted Mr. Bowser as he identified them for what they were.

"Eh, cully? What's de matter wid you?" was queried as they both drew nearer.

"Say, Jim, de old baldhead is on to something good and don't want to let us in on de ground floor."

"By thunder, but didn't I tell you to go on!" shouted Mr. Bowser as he scrambled up.

"You did, cully, but we are in no hurry about it. Got a couple more smoozers? Why don't ye give us de glad hand and make us feel to home?"

Alas for the tree toads and whippoorwills and nightingales! Mr. Bowser sailed in. The tramps expected to pick a fuss with him and win an easy victory, but never were men more mistaken. He had them licked and on the run within five minutes. They mused him up some in return, but he sat down and lighted another cigar, and if he had been given half an hour to get over it the songs of the birds and insects might have appealed to his heart again. Only about ten minutes had gone by when the constable returned.

He had with him in the wagon six stout yeomen, and as they all leaped to the ground the official said:

"Now, then, you old sheep thief, will you move on or go to the county jail?"

"How dare you apply such a term to me! Do you know who I am, sir?"

"I don't, and I don't care. Come on, fellers!"

There was but one thing for Mr. Bowser to do. He took to his legs and struck a 2:40 gait. The six took after him; but, though he was short and fat, the tree toads and whippoorwills were encouraging him to do his best, and after he had been run a mile the pursuit was abandoned.

It was 2 o'clock in the morning when Mrs. Bowser heard soft footsteps on the sidewalk. They turned in at the gate and mounted the steps. Some one unlocked the door. Some one came upstairs. Some one undressed without a word and moving around on tiptoes, and some one fell into bed with a grunt to turn on his back and say to himself:

"Thank heaven she is asleep, and in the morning I will lie to her and tell her I had the best time in my life!"

M. QUAD.

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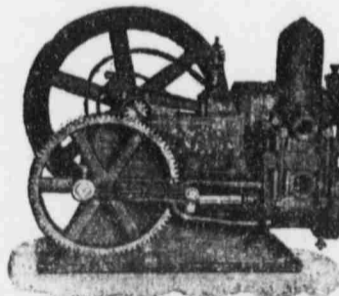
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